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JOSEPH BELL



DR JOSEPH BELL

Latest Photograph by Horsburgh

JOSEPH BELL

M.D., F.R.C.S., J.P., D.L.

ETC.

AN APPRECIATION
BY AN OLD FRIEND

SAXBY, Jessie M.E.

WITH ELEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

OLIPHANT, ANDERSON & FERRIER
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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JOSEPH BELL

BORN 2ND DECEMBER 1837

DIED 4TH OCTOBER 1911

Eldest son of Dr Benjamin Bell and Cecilia Craigie, married Edith Katherine, daughter of the Honble. James Erskine Murray in 1865
Mrs Bell died in 1874

M.D., F.R.C.S. Edinburgh ; J.P. (Midlothian) ;
D.L. Edinburgh ; Consulting Surgeon to the
Royal Infirmary, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, and Hospital for Incurables ; Member of
the University Court, Edinburgh University ;
sometime President of the College of Surgeons,
Edinburgh ; Educated at the Edinburgh Academy
and the Edinburgh University ; went through the
ordinary course of a Hospital Surgeon ; Editor
for 23 years (1873-1896) of the *Edinburgh
Medical Journal*. Publications—"Manual of
Surgical Operations," 7th Edition, 1894 ; "Notes
on Surgery for Nurses," 6th Edition, 1906

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JOSEPH BELL

WHEN first Conan Doyle's remarkable creation brought its author fame he informed the public that (when a student at Edinburgh) he found the prototype of *Sherlock Holmes* in his admired professional "chief," Dr Joseph Bell.

No doubt it is true that the Professor's wonderful gift of quick perception and rapid deductive reasoning—by which he reached in a flash truths hidden among tangles—gave the clever romancer a suggestion for his great detective's character. But it was only one—and that a subordinate one—of Bell's characteristics which went to the forming of *Sherlock Holmes*.

Rather unfortunately the world was led to understand that the two personalities were identical in every respect, and since

Dr Bell's death in October 1911 the Press has unwittingly given more and more weight to the mistaken representation of a good man's personality, and that must be the excuse of one who knew him intimately for now venturing to recall some reminiscences which will show his absolute *unlikeness*, save in one respect, to Conan Doyle's masterpiece.

The subtle, callous man-hunter, tracking a criminal with cool and sleuth-hound persistency, had little, indeed, in common with the kind-hearted doctor, whose pity for a sinner was ever on the alert to help him out of the mire.

As amateur detective he never brought the wrong-doer to public justice.

On the contrary, his talents in that line were used to screen, and help the culprit to retrieve. The success of his efforts earned for him the gratitude of many a weak soul, and many a troubled patient, whose suffering the keen grey eyes traced to its true source in the mind—many a

burdened life has had its care removed, its weight lifted, and its errors amended through the wisdom and sympathy of "Joe Bell," as he was affectionately styled by the students and people of Edinburgh. One of his favourite little sentences was: "We must not give the poor soul away."

He was at one time much interested in the reading of character through hand-writing and composition, and he used to send me letters for the purpose of testing my fancied talent in that line.

Everything that could lead to the identity of the writers was carefully erased.

A few quotations from some of those letters will serve to show how much, even in his earlier years, he was doing for others.

"I take no credit to myself at all. . . . You started me afresh."

"I thank you for making it possible for me to make up for the past."

"But for you it might have been impossible for me to retrieve."

"By telling me straight what you thought

of me, and by showing me the way to make amends, you rescued me from . . .”

“I was drifting on and on, but you have saved me.”

“I know you will be pleased that I am succeeding at last, through you.”

“You did so temper Justice with mercy. God bless you.”

I may just mention here that Dr Bell did not feel flattered by what he called his “nickname” (*Sherlock Holmes*). As late as 1901 he wrote:—“Why bother yourself about the cataract of drivel for which Conan Doyle is responsible? I am sure he never imagined that such a heap of rubbish would fall on my devoted head in consequence of his stories.”

At another time he said: “I hope folk that know me see another and better side to me than what Doyle saw. You will not let me be maligned. I wish I felt that I were one half as nice as you think I am.”

From the newspaper extracts which he sent me from time to time, I may here give

a few sentences bearing on this "sore subject" of *Sherlock Holmes*.

The *Strand Magazine*, reporting "A day with Dr Conan Doyle," said (quoting the romancer's words): "I was a clerk in Dr Bell's ward. A clerk's duties are to note down all the patients to be seen, and muster them together. Often I would have seventy or eighty.

"When everything was ready I would show them in to Mr Bell, who would have the students gathered round him. His intuitive powers were simply marvellous.

"Case No. 1 would step up. 'I see,' said Mr Bell, 'you're suffering from drink. You even carry a flask in the inside pocket of your coat.'

"Another case would come forward, 'Cobbler, I see.' Then he would turn to the students and point out to them that the inside of the knee of the man's trousers was worn, that was where the man had rested the lapstone—a peculiarity only found in cobblers.

“All this impressed me very much. He was continually before me, his sharp, piercing grey eyes, eagle nose, and striking features. There he would sit in his chair, with fingers together—he was very dexterous with his hands—and just look at the patient before him.

“He was most kind and painstaking with the students—a real good friend—and when I took my degree and went to Africa the remarkable individuality and discriminating tact of my old master made a deep and lasting impression on me, though I had not the faintest idea that it would one day lead me to forsake medicine for story-writing.”

After drawing these interesting statements from the novelist, the *Strand* reporter contrived to elicit some more information on the subject from Dr Bell himself, who, replying to the *Strand*, wrote: “You ask about the kind of teaching. . . . In teaching the treatment of disease and accident all careful teachers have first to show the student how to recognise

accurately the case. The recognition depends in great measure on the accurate and rapid appreciation of small points in which the diseased differs from the healthy state. In fact, the student must be taught first to observe carefully. To interest him in this kind of work we teachers find it useful to show the student how much a trained use of the observation can discover in ordinary matters such as the previous history, nationality, and occupation of a patient.

“The patient, too, is likely to be impressed by your ability to cure him in the future if he sees you at a glance know much of his past.

“For instance, physiognomy helps you to nationality, accent to district, and, to an educated ear, almost to county. Nearly every handicraft writes its sign-manual on the hands. The scars of the miner differ from those of the quarryman. The carpenter’s callosities are not those of the mason. The shoemaker and the tailor are

quite different. The soldier and the sailor differ in gait—though last month I had to tell a man who said he was a soldier that he had been a sailor in his boyhood. The subject is endless. The tattoo marks on hand or arm will tell their own tale as to voyages. The ornaments on the watch chain of the successful settler will tell you where he made his money. . . . Carry the same idea of using one's senses accurately and constantly, and you will see that many a surgical case will bring his past history, national, social, and medical, into the consulting-room as the patient walks in."

Sometimes Dr Bell's keen sense of humour got the better of his annoyance, and he buried just resentment in a joke. Thus he wrote to me once: "The fiends of your profession won't let me alone, and I am haunted by my double whom you so hate, namely, *Sherlock Holmes*."

"Just see what a wretch from the *Pall Mall Gazette* has inveigled me into confessing. I don't like to confess, I prefer



BENJAMIN BELL, F.R.C.S.E., F.R.S.E
1749-1806

Dr Joseph Bell's Great-Grandfather

the exalted position of confessor. However, I did not give the deevil any secrets. Read what I said, and laugh, as I do, at the persistence of your literary brethren."

The newspaper cutting he enclosed is worth quoting, though its subject spoke disparagingly of it. "For twenty years," Dr Bell said, "or more, I have been engaged in the practice of medical jurisprudence on behalf of the Crown, but there is little I can tell you about it. It would not be fair to mention that which is the private knowledge of the Crown and those associated therewith, and the cases which have been made public would not bear repetition.

"The only credit I can take to myself is that appertaining to the circumstance that I always impressed over and over again upon all my scholars—Conan Doyle among them—the vast importance of little distinctions, the endless significance of the trifles.

"The great majority of people, of inci-

dents, and of cases, resemble each other in the main and larger features. For instance, most men have apiece a head, two arms, a nose, a mouth, and a certain number of teeth. It is the little differences, in themselves trifles, such as the droop of an eyelid, or what not, which differentiate men."

"Will you give me an instance of the manner in which you note these all-important trifles?" the interviewer asked.

"*This* struck me as funny at the time. A man walked into the room where I was instructing the students, and his case seemed to be a very simple one. I was talking about what was wrong with him. 'Of course, gentlemen,' I happened to say, 'he has been a soldier in a Highland regiment, and probably a bandsman.' I pointed out the swagger in his walk, suggestive of the piper; while his shortness told me that if he had been a soldier it was probably as a bandsman. In fact, he had the whole appearance of a man in

one of the Highland regiments. The man turned out to be nothing but a shoemaker, and said he had never been in the army in his life. This was rather a floorer, but being absolutely certain I was right, and seeing that something was up, I did a pretty cool thing. I told two of the strongest clerks (or dressers) to remove the man to a side room, and to detain him till I came. I went and had him stripped, and I daresay your own acuteness has told you the sequel."

The interviewer modestly replied, "You have given me credit for that which I don't possess, I assure you." "Why," said Dr Bell, "under the left breast I instantly detected a little blue 'D' branded on his skin. He was a deserter. That was how they used to mark them in the Crimean days and later, although it is not permitted now. Of course the reason of his evasion was at once clear. . . .

"I always regarded him" (Conan Doyle)
"as one of the best students I ever had.

He was exceedingly interested always upon anything connected with diagnosis, and was never tired of trying to discover those little details which one looks for.

“I recollect he was amused once when a patient walked in and sat down. ‘Good morning, Pat,’ I said, for it was impossible not to see that he was an Irishman.

“‘Good morning, your honour,’ replied the patient.

“‘Did you like your walk over the Links to-day, as you came in from the south side of the town?’ I asked.

“‘Yes,’ said Pat, ‘did your honour see me?’

“Well, Conan Doyle could not see how I knew that, absurdly simple as it was.

“On a showery day, such as that had been, the reddish clay at bare parts of the Links adheres to the boot, and a tiny part is bound to remain. There is no such clay anywhere else round the town for miles. That and one or two similar instances excited Doyle’s keenest interest,

and set him experimenting himself in the same direction, which, of course, was just what I wanted, with him and with all my other scholars."

The *Pall Mall Gazette* wanted to hear more.

"Is there any system," its reporter asked, "by which the habit of observation is to be cultivated among the police, for instance?"

"There is among doctors," replied the Professor. "It is taught regularly to the students here at all events. It would be a great thing if the police generally could be trained to observe more closely. The lines upon which it might be done would be to make the prizes bigger for the educated man.

"At present the incentive to special training is not too great, I believe. The fatal mistake which the ordinary policeman makes is this, that he gets his theory first, and then makes the facts fit it, instead of getting his facts first of all and making all

his little observations and deductions until he is driven irresistibly by them into an elucidation in a direction he may never have originally contemplated.

“With regard to the doctors, I think every good teacher, if he is to make his men good doctors, must get them to cultivate the habit of noticing the little apparent trifles. Any really good doctor ought to be able to tell before a patient has fairly sat down, a good deal of what is the matter with him or her.

“With women especially the observant doctor can often tell by noticing her, exactly what part of her body she is going to talk about. But to get back to the police. You cannot expect the ordinary ‘bobby,’ splendid fellow as he is so far as pluck and honesty go, to stand eight hours on his legs and then develop great mental strength, he doesn’t get enough blood to his brain to permit of it.

“The only feasible scheme which strikes me would be to get a good man and give

him carte-blanche about choosing his assistants and the special education of them."

Commenting on the above to me, Dr Bell said: "I am sure I did not say a word that conveyed any new theory. I am not an original genius, though I like some of my little friends to believe I am infallible where they and their affairs are concerned."

Joseph Bell was the eldest son of God-fearing parents. They "went out" with ^{some of the} earnest Scottish ministers in 1843, who left the State Church not willingly, but because they "feared God rather than man."

His father was a well-known physician, his mother a member of an old county family. They were zealous, consistent Christians, and their example had far-reaching results, the result nearest their hearts being the noble life of their first-born—"dedicated to God in his cradle," the mother told his wife.

He was an elder in Free St George's Church for many years, and its present

pastors paid remarkable tribute to his memory at the time of his death.

Dr Kelman said : “He lived to be the father of the Session, and to gain in ever-increasing measure the gratitude, love, and honour of his fellow office-bearers and members. His advice was shrewd and sagacious, his loyalty unwavering, his generosity as lavish as it was secret. Of his public work it is not necessary to speak in detail here. The city, and indeed the world, remember it with pride and gratitude.

“Born of an ancient Border family, he had in his veins the blood of fighting-men — men who fought in their day for the Covenants of Scotland.

“But in that family there arose a line of distinguished physicians and surgeons, who through four successive generations waged an unceasing war against disease and suffering, and he was the last of that line.

“His career was one of the most brilliant and most serviceable of his time. His



DR JOSEPH BELL
1786-1848
Dr Bell's Grandfather

fame as a surgeon was world-wide, and his books made no small contribution to the advance of that great department of the healing art. He had to do with the rise and progress of an extraordinarily large number of public institutions in connection with his profession. He did much for the University of Edinburgh, and took an active part in public life. He has left behind him a great multitude of lives saved, and healed, and restored to strength by his skill and beneficence.

“These are matters of common knowledge, but I shall speak of him as I found him. The impression he has left with me is that of a very heroic man—one of the great men. He reminded me often of that older hero who—

‘For man’s sake

Laboured and meant to labour his life long, who held his life
Out on his hand for any man to take.’

“His was an essentially simple nature, direct and frank, clear in thought and speech, strong, vital, and immediate. He

added to phenomenal powers of observation a wide culture and a catholic interest, which kept him always busy and bright as he moved about among us.

“He was a righteous man, tolerant indeed of the frailties of weaker souls, but always intolerant of meanness or of sham, and with no time for foolishness. Yet within so forceful a nature there were, as there always are in the strongest men, great reserves of tenderness. Beneath the constant labour there was lifelong love, tried by great bereavements, yet never embittered, but always full of kindness for his friends, and of pity for the weak and suffering. Deeper still, the secret and source of all the rest, lay a child-like faith and a rare habit of devotion. His religion, like that of many scientists, expressed itself in a very simple faith. He was interested in new phases of belief, but for himself he did not need them, and to the last he found strength and peace in those great forms of faith through which the fathers worshipped,

and gained the assurance of eternal life."

Dr Bell was indeed loyal to his Church, but broad-minded to a degree. Writing at one time of divisions in Churches he said: "These divisions of Churches seem to me most futile and trifling, but terribly bad for religion. . . Of course you agree with me that the split in our Kirks is giving the game to the enemy.

"If one could only swallow the Roman Catholic 'whole' how sweet it would be! But one can't put one's conscience in the hands of a priest. And a Pope! No! And all that posturing, and dressing up, and ancient fables—a sane mind can't accept all that."

At another time he wrote: "About the Kirks, 'Influential laymen,' whose weight you think should be given to stop unseemly rows, are now few in number and gradually becoming fewer. Laymen are not moved, as of old, to support the Church. This may partly be because churchmen don't like

interference, and often think they know better about most things than the mere layman. Commonsense is not a common virtue among ministers, though *some* I know have more commonsense than most men."

"Your Established Church is making great strides in many ways, and is now quite as evangelical as our U.F. Some day they will come together. . . ."

"I quite agree with you as to the bigotry of —, so you see I am not likely to scold you for that, and I am glad you are well enough to quote Browning to the point. 'Pippa Passes' is a wonderful bit of work. I have no patience with bigots. There is always some hypocrisy in conjunction with bigotry."

"Because I have said that I believe confession to be good for the soul is no reason why I should be accused of leanings to Rome. You know better than that, and if I were within reach of your ears they should suffer for your '*impudence*.' Pray who was it first put me in the position of a

Father-confessor? And how often have I said that I have no objection to receiving confessions, but that I never will submit myself to the ordeal? You say I don't need to do so, that you guess my 'ways' without any telling. Well, I am a candid person. Moreover, I have told you most things that were of the least interest about me, so where is the use of a confessional? Joking apart, I think you get carried away by your imagination, which is so vivid, and you are too easily impressed by the beautiful in 'things seen.' A person of your sort must avoid the fascinations of Rome. They are a clever lot, those priests, and I don't say they are wrong. Some I know are saints on the earth, and shame our ministers often with their self-sacrificing lives. But they want converts. . . . How would you like to lie in Purgatory for any indefinite number of years? If your friends neglected to pay for your Masses, *there* you might stick.

"I won't promise to pay for one single

Mass if you are so 'left' as to believe in such a creed. But I think I know you are not so foolish as all that. Stick to the auld Kirk and its teaching, you can't find better. . . ."

"Dr Macgregor's letter is fine, and just like the dear old man. I sometimes 'wander' in holiday time and find my way into his kirk. After all your creed does, as the old man says, cover everything—'I believe in God.' What more does any one want? Stick to that."

An incident in his early life will serve to show the humanity and enthusiasm with which he entered into the duties of his profession.

At the time to which I refer diphtheria was a more obscure and novel disease than it is now. Its terrors were greater because its treatment was not so well understood as at the present day. The famous surgeon, Syme, was performing wonderful operations in those days, and was the first, we are told, to introduce

tracheotomy in cases of diphtheria. Joe Bell was at that time Syme's special assistant.

A little child, suffering from that terrible scourge, was brought to the Royal Infirmary, and operated upon by Professor Syme; but the "poisonous stuff" had accumulated so much, and the air passages were so clogged, that there seemed no method of relieving the patient except by suction. Instruments for that purpose had not then been invented, and Joe Bell did the service required—sucked the poison from the child's throat, risking his life for that of a poor man's child.

He took diphtheria very badly. It was scarcely possible to escape, and for a long time the young surgeon suffered from the deadly effects of that action. Indeed he told me that his voice never wholly recovered.

It is so common for medical men to do noble deeds that the public scarcely comment upon exceptionally brave pro-

fessional heroism. Yet titles and V.C.'s. are given for less things than that which set young Bell in a foremost place among our nation's best.

When Queen Victoria came to Edinburgh on one of her rare but welcome visits, it chanced that a little child was in Dr Bell's ward convalescent from diphtheria. Years had gone by, and the profession had that disease well in hand and nurses, rejoicing over a vanquished foe, decorated the child's cot in anticipation of a visit from Her Majesty.

When our motherly Queen stood by the little bed and heard the story of a doctor's heroism she said some gracious and very womanly words to Dr Bell, then requested that his ward should be named "The Victoria."

When telling me of this interesting little episode he said with quite boyish simplicity, "The dear old lady was so friendly, and I was not one bit flustered."

His desire for sympathy, and his appre-

ciation of it was touchingly intense, and yet he had a way of looking and speaking with almost flippant unconcern when feeling most deeply. This was at times when he knew that any display of emotion would "upset everything." Thus many people, who knew him well, saw little of his inner self. They saw him as the hope-inspiring physician, smiling and chatting, cheering the sorrowful, soothing the sufferer, quick to see fun lurking near solemnity, taking up the burden of others with seemingly no burden of his own, bringing a gay good humour to meet anxious doubts and dreadful fears.

When young his bearing was that of a joyous nature on whom the gods had showered their good gifts. Even in later years when many bereavements had wounded his warm affections to the quick his smile was ready, and his sense of fun as fresh as ever. His self-control was perfect.

Shortly after the death of one very near and dear he wrote: "Our pastor in his

Easter sermon spoke a lot about the vein of melancholy that shewed in Christian folk of the present day,—so different from the sturdy faith and cheerfulness of early Christians to whom Paul writes. Don't, therefore, shut yourself up in philosophical indifference, or sad regrets. You can't, try ever so hard. You are not made that way. Work is the key at present—work at your desk for the mind, and hard work in the garden for the body. I believe you will get safe in the end to your desired haven, having your anchor cast safe within the veil." Thus gently did he help a doubting and morbid faith.

But the brave spirit had its own hours of depression, as one can guess from such brief remarks as the following, "I wasn't any duller or more miserable than usual, was I?"

"I am very glad every one is not so clear-sighted as you are, for I should hate people to comment on my 'feelins.' With an old close friend it is no use trying to



DR BENJAMIN BELL
Dr Joseph Bell's Father



MRS BENJAMIN BELL
Dr Bell's Mother

be jocular ; but, my child, I think you too were only smiling from the lips outwards, as I so often do."

"I can thoroughly see your point about death. Yours is the Greek view. 'The sun is pleasant, and, brother, there is the wind on the heath,' and so on. . . . I think I would be awfully bored in a tropical Eden. . . . As you say April has its memories, but for old folks like us what month is free from them ?"

"I begin my answer within five minutes after receiving your sad little note. You don't tell all the trouble, but I see you are worried about something. Is it the spring with its birds and flowers only, or——? Steady and uneventful work (if dull) is the best antidote to memories and vain regrets. So stick in (as the boys say) at your story-writing, and be glad in the thought that you have given pleasure by your pen. Be brave and don't show anybody that you believe that this is—as it is—a weary world."

“I am so glad to think my letter was a pleasure to you. It is so little we can do to comfort one another from a distance that it is a blessing when it comes off.”

“I am often like the old lady in George Macdonald’s ‘Malcolm,’ ‘it’s a blessin’ I have no feelins.’”

I want Joe Bell’s own words to reveal him, for they tell better than I can something of the versatile character which was not always well understood. A few detached sentences may be enough for this purpose.

Remarks on men, books, and public events :—

“You have made good use of the library, and the criticisms are capital, especially on poor J. S. Mills’ biography. It is a very sad book, and he wasn’t what one might call a ‘wise body.’ When clever men go off the beaten track they often get lost in a marsh.”

“The three books (new ones) I have liked most this year have been ‘Theo-

phrastus Such,' 'Dean Hook's Life,' and S. Wilberforce's 1st vol., the last I am just in the middle of. It is most fascinating, and he must have been a 'real nice' man, though with his weaknesses."

"I had a 'crack' with the Dean of Westminster to-day, and the sister who keeps house for him. Both charming, as folk are when they are not thinking all of themselves."

"As for the newspapers, many of them are below contempt in their partisanship, and especially in their putting in their columns such a variety of obvious lies. They seem to expect us to believe anything the cunning Asiatic likes to tell."

. . . "I am so sorry for the Tzar. He is between the devil and the deep sea—Socialists and his army. He has to give in; but I see no sense in trying to irritate and libel a proud and honest nation like Russia."

"I entirely agree with you about the Baltic Fleet. I am sure they don't hanker

after a fight with Admiral Togo. Poor Russia, and that wretched Tzar! what a time he has of it; and I fear the old story, 'Nicky ran away' is still true. What a chance the poor fellow had, and how he missed it!"

"I am delighted your laddie has done so well in South Africa. This war will soon be over, and will make for peace and the right. Majuba made it an absolute necessity. It would have been finished long ago but for traitors at home. I can feel for the Boers, they have fought fairly and gallantly. It won't be a pleasure trip to Pretoria as some thought, but it is bound to come off in time. Poor old Kruger. No one has a good word for him, and yet I am sure he sincerely believes himself to be a saint and martyr. You know the light that is in one may be dark, and how great is that darkness!"

"Why so wroth at Chamberlain? You surely don't want us to be kicked out of South Africa. Once a nation begins to

give in, it is a dying nation, and soon will be a dead one. We are worrying through, and all will come right. We've threshed through as heavy a sea before, and will thresh through a heavier yet. Let us be thankful that statesmen are not always representative of our people."

"The war and influenza have knocked the nervous system of the nation out of time. The war is very sad, and war is always wicked; but would you have approved of Kruger invading Natal 'to eat fish at Durban'—as the Boers said they meant to do? The end is in sight, don't fear, and the natives will get a chance of decent treatment in South Africa. It will be peaceable and well-governed presently. I have a lot of relatives at the front in various capacities, so have, like you, a *personal* feeling about it all. Don't go to see your boy yet!"

"Poor Dreyfus. It is a terrible tale, and yet France is not all base and cruel. Their army generals seem to be a

rotten crew at present, and need to be taught a lesson. No doubt you are right that there is much of the tiger nature in a Frenchman, but even tigers have good traits. The French have splendid recuperative powers and marvellous vitality."

"We spent a most interesting afternoon at Walmer seeing the quaint old castle, and its relics of Nelson and Wellington. One should not see a hero too near. I like what remains of Nelson and Wellington, but I should not have liked them 'near by.'"

"Tell me how Goethe dissected women's souls. I rather fancied he broke their hearts, and spoiled their lives, which seems a trait in poets."

"I looked through 'The Vultures' and thought it awfully dull. The reason novels don't appeal to me is, I fancy, that real life is so much more interesting to a doctor who has eyes in his head."

"Your MSS. arrived safely, and I should

have returned it sooner, and also sent a critique, but I have been very busy. . . . I don't know your authority for . . . I can't recall any such incidents in my reading; but I don't know Jewish history well except from the Bible, and I have no copy of Josephus handy. You know your ground."

"Many thanks for telling me the sources of your Jew novel. Your imagination is certainly most vivid, and I am sure you are right in your conclusions. The subject of your present novel is a most interesting one. I, like you, am a great believer in the Jews. They have kept up their race so splendidly, and are always looking still for the Messiah. Yes, they do indeed inherit the Promises, and some day these will be fulfilled, as you say, to astonish the Gentiles."

"Your paper in the *Antiquary* is interesting. I suppose you are right in saying that we Scotch got a lot of our fine expressive terms from the Scandinavians.

We got the best that's in us from them."

"I send for your amusement a stupid address I had to give last month in Yorkshire. Much of it is technical, and not understandable of lay people, so don't read more than over the surface."

"This goes to assure you of my sympathy in your worship of sticks and stones. One of the most interesting texts I know is that one about being in league with the stones, and the beasts of the field being at peace with one. Job v. 23."

"I love parables and fairy tales, so rejoice in your letter to-day. I read all your letters in the *Scotsman*, and am astonished at the variety and accuracy of your knowledge. Tom Speedy vouches for you as a naturalist, and he knows. He is a splendid one himself, such a keen and clever observer, and self-taught, which makes it all the more creditable."

"I have just been reading your last letter in the *Scotsman* about the school bairns.



DR JOSEPH BELL
The Youth



You make out a good case. I wish all the poor weans could have dry boots and a good luncheon. School-board teaching must be 'gey dreich,' and not very useful on the whole."

"Farrer's 'Life of Christ' is delightful, but it is long since I read it, so must take it up again, like you, as a bedside book. A few words out of a good book goes far to compose one before sleep comes."

"About the angler and his wiles, I read your fable and stand subdued. I think it is the surroundings of the gentle craft that appeal to me, the absolute peace from the strife of tongues, and the solitude, and the water and the Highland air.

"As for the fish's lacerated mouth, you know it is cartilage where it meets bone, and neither of these tissues have nerves. I caught a fish some years ago in the afternoon that in the forenoon had carried away the hooks and casting-line of my companion. I had the pleasure of restoring to him his favourite fly."

“And so you have joined the ‘ghosts.’ I did not know that ‘ghosting’ was possible by big authors. Indeed I don’t believe that ‘——’ was written by a ‘ghost.’ Some of the wretched stories may be worked up by one, but I fear the plots are ——’s own.”

“I like your Canada paper. It has a nice fresh spring about it. Bronchoes and buckboards sound uncivilised enough for even a wild Shetlander. I hope you are right that Canada will be the great Scottish nation of the future, but you must love *old* Scotland best.”

“The Carnegie gift is a very doubtful advantage, we fear, but time will show. *He means well.*”

“I am sorry you feel too young to thoroughly enjoy Scott, but it is all a question of taste. He is a fine, wholesome, level-headed man, and I read his books not because they are stories, but because they are *human.*”

“Don’t call your work unsuccessful. It

has boiled the bairns' pot for many years. It would have been better work if you could have given more time to the polishing, etc. But the results are marvellous, and you are the sort of woman that does not care for fame.

“Make one of your stories a tragedy and that will tend to cheerfulness, because you always rise to anything tragic, and go off on the other tack.”

“Dear old Dr John Brown used to speak of being ‘off the fang,’ like a dry pump. To cure the pump you must first pour water down it. To set you writing again you must read old nice books—Shakespeare, the Waverley Novels, Dickens, Burns, and the Bible first of all.”

“Don't believe that clever man. No one can ever persuade himself that wrong can be right. He may wish to do wrong, and please himself by pretending he has convinced himself, but all in vain. He knows at the back of his mind—and

especially when he wakes at 3 a.m.—that wrong is wrong and not right.

“Your beautiful beliefs are NOT self-invented fables, they are part of a higher life, and evidence that in a happier future we shall attain to something better than our present selves and better than the present life.”

“Who would not appreciate the magnificent cheek of Becky Sharp; and Miss —— is certainly a little like her. But would I not be a very poor doctor if patients did not feel that *their* woes were my chief concern? So really no blowing up is needed for that case. But it must have been well done that time, for I was very busy, cross, and hungry when Miss —— called, and my chances of food and peace were diminished in exact proportion to the length of her stay and story. And please remember, Becky did not stick at a lie. But hysterical people are generally liars.”

It must be admitted that Joe Bell had

little patience or sympathy with hysterical folk.

The allusion to "the library" recalls one of his thoughtful and most charitable actions. He was interested in my literary efforts, and knew that I had no access to books for help. There came to me from Messrs Douglas and Foulis' Library a year's ticket, and a polite request to know what books they should send.

I thought there was some mistake, and went to the library to enquire, but all the satisfaction I got was to be told that the subscription had been paid in my name, and they could (or would) give no further explanation.

For years—in fact as long as I needed and could not otherwise obtain books of reference, etc.—my subscription ticket was sent in that way. Once, feeling quite sure of who had thought of the timely gift, I told Joe about it. His reply was, "You have more friends than you know," and his manner was such that I did not dare say

more; but years later he admitted that the gift was his.

I have mentioned this as an example of the way he went about doing good. Many things as timely and as kindly he did for many a struggling soul.

His interests in my attempts at authorship led him to offer to correct "proof" or revise MSS. and I was often greatly indebted to his keen literary instinct for help in that way. He would scribble "gush" over passages which I had considered affecting. "Not clearly stated, say it over again," would stare at me from a page I had laboured to make effective. "High falutin'" was his verdict on what I thought fine, picturesque composition!

On the other hand, any small success of mine met with ready and hearty congratulations. Thus:—"I am so pleased with the splendid notices of the dear little book, and quite proud of the reflected glory on my own humble effort at the end."

His "humble effort" was a beautiful poem

which I had found in a volume called "The Shadow of the Rock." The poem was published anonymously, but it fitted so well to my subject that I had added it to the little Memoir of my "One wee Lassie," not knowing the authorship.

It had been composed when Joe Bell was a quite young man, and it refers to his wife's sister, who met with a tragic accidental death.

When telling me the sad story Mrs Bell said: "Joe was such a comfort to us then. People who hear him joking and laughing have no idea how tender-hearted he is. They can't believe that he feels serious things so very seriously. He is brimming-over with loving-kindness."

I will give the poem here, because it shows how early he had learned the true way of imparting religious comfort.

"Weep not for her, for she hath crossed the river,
We almost saw HIM meet her at the shore,
And lead her through the golden gates where never
Sorrow or death can touch her any more.

Weep not for her, that she hath reached before us
The safe warm shelter of her long-loved home.
Weep not for her, she may be bending o'er us,
In quiet wonder when we too shall come.

Weep not for her. Think how she may be kneeling,
Gazing her fill upon the Master's face,
A loving humble smile but half revealing
The perfect peace she feels in Mary's place.

But weep for those round whom the fight is thronging,
Who still must buckle heavy armour on,
Who dare not pray for rest, though sore the longing,
Till all the weary working day is done.

And pray for them, that they though sad and lonely,
May still with patience bear the cross HE sends,
And learn that tears, and wounds, and losses only
Make peace the sweeter when the warfare ends."

It may not be out of place here to say a few words about the sweet wife whose charming personality is still so clearly present in my thoughts, who died so young, whose memory was cherished by the husband who rejoined her on her birthday thirty-seven years after she had gone.

She was such a happy-souled creature, always thinking how she could help others and please him.

At the time of their marriage they agreed that a tenth part of their income was to be set aside "for God's service."

We can picture the happy young couple thus planning to carry out one of the Biblical injunctions in its literal sense, and so beginning their life together with Christ-like beneficence as a rule in their home. This rule he kept all his life.

It is true one seldom saw Joe Bell's name on a printed subscription list, and I have heard folk say, "You needn't ask him. He keeps a tight hand on his purse."

As a matter of fact his generosity was great, but was exercised with the discretion of a man who knew the false from the true, who doubted the wisdom of many organised charities. His charity did not follow beaten tracks. He took infinite trouble to find out where help was most needed, would do most service, and could be given most unobtrusively. "Helping lame dogs over stiles," was one of his favourite quotations.

Through the all-too-brief time they were together his wife seconded his every noble impulse, and the touching words on her tombstone—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,"—tells how much he appreciated her lovely character. Her memory was tenderly cherished to the latest hour of his life, and he looked forward to their reunion as a literal fact about which there could be no doubt.

He believed that the soul passes through no sudden or great change when it leaves the body, but "simply continues the life it led on earth in a pure atmosphere beyond the reach of all temptations, and that enables it to progress in all manner of spiritual goodness."

He thought that in some dim way our dead were allowed to hear of us at times, even possibly to visit us, and he loved the thought of guardian angels. Knowing his sentiments on these points I sent him birthday greeting (his first birthday



DR JOSEPH BELL
The Young Man

without Edith) in the form of the following verses :—

GREETING FROM THE SPIRITLAND

(for 2nd December, 1874)

My guardian angel swiftly wend
On willing wings to Earth,
And bearing Balm of Gilead bend
Beside a darkened hearth.

The veil which shrouds yon home from this
Is mystical and dim,
He cannot view my perfect bliss,
I may not look on him.

But on the burdened breast of night,
By path of solemn sky
Is borne within this Land of Light
The echo of a sigh.

Ah, though mine eyes can gladly see
That loss is often gain,
I know that sigh was sent to me,
From bosom wrung by pain.

And though I know the "hidden ways"
Are perfect, and in love,
I fain would lend his darker days
A sunbeam from above.

His darker days,—when memories crowd
To weave their wistful spell
Around the hours that had no cloud,
Or ere the shadow fell.

This day it was my wont to greet
With laughing word and wile,
He listens for my coming feet,
He wearies for my smile.
Oh, haste to tell him, spirit sweet,
'Tis but a little while.

A portion of my peace impart,
Yet softly whisper how
In heaven I bless his aching heart,
And bless his saddened brow.

I bless his sorrow for there leads
No surer road to rest,—
The lonely soul that silent bleeds
Takes GOD to be its guest.

My angel, bear a touch divine
To earthly eyes so dim.
Say he can dream what joys are mine,
And I can pray for him.

Edinburgh was not the home of Dr Bell's heart, but the chief field of his labours. There he was best known and

most fully appreciated. He was looked upon as one of the city's most gifted men, and took a "front seat" in all to do with his Alma Mater and his profession. I am not competent to speak of his professional ability or status as a public man, I only know that the honours he held were earned by his talents as a teacher and surgeon, the respect he received was universally declared meet tribute to his many admirable qualities of head and heart.

It may be of use here to give briefly a few details regarding Dr Bell's literary work, and data of some facts in his life.

He was born on the 2nd December 1837, therefore had almost completed his seventy-fourth year when he laid down the burden of mortality on the 4th of October 1911.

It would seem that an old custom had been rigidly followed in his race regarding the naming of sons, for we find an eldest

son always “called after” his father’s father. Thus—

Benjamin Bell, Surgeon.

Joseph Bell, Surgeon.

Benjamin Bell, Surgeon.

Joseph Bell, Surgeon—the subject of this little appreciation.

Benjamin Bell, son, who died before his father.

My friend’s published works were few, for he had not time to devote to the making of books. He wrote a good deal in connection with the *Medical Journal*, which he edited for twenty-three years (1873 to 1896), and he contributed occasional articles to magazines and newspapers. He was the author of two very useful little books which have gone through six and seven editions. These are, “Manual of Surgical Operations” and “Notes on Surgery for Nurses.” He was keenly interested in the movement for the higher instruction of nurses, but

sometimes lost patience with what he called "the young-lady-craze for putting on a pretty uniform." I do not suppose the ladies who rushed into the ranks of the sick nurses ever guessed how often their teacher felt inclined "to laugh or say a sweer wird" over their inefficiency, or their affectations. When speaking of his Head-nurse at the Royal Infirmary he said: "Don't be afraid to come to my Ward. You won't find one of your pet-aversions there. Nurse Dickson is a real treasure, and worth a dozen of the lady-nurses."

Joe was very modest regarding literary work of his which did not pertain to the profession, and he preferred that his name should not be attached to such "small efforts," as he styled them.

He was for some years President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and he was always very jealous for the honour of that Institution.

I think one of the branches of his

profession which he liked best was Medical Jurisprudence, and he was often consulted on legal questions brought under his notice as a doctor. The plots for some of my little detective stories were suggested by incidents he told me had occurred in his own experience.

He was a staunch Conservative in politics, but liberal-minded always, and ready to acknowledge the wisdom and justice of some Radical measures. He once wrote, "And so you dare confess yourself a rabid *Leebral*. Well, there are saints as well as sinners among that crew. Some of my very good friends are on your side of politics. If you keep your mind open, and allow that we have something decent to say for ourselves, I shall not scold you. I think it best to keep out of the war of politics—though once or twice I have been let in for expressing my views in public."

"I see little use in publishing one's opinions on politics. People lose their

heads and their tempers over the like. No doubt your trade of the Pen leads you into that sort of strife, so I absolve you from sinning thereby ; but my profession is absolutely antagonistic to all such discussions, so I keep out of them. But I like to hear your ideas, and your hero-worship of some politicians who are really no heroes at all is very entertaining and very feminine. You see I have adopted your term 'Trade.' It is a better word than 'profession.' A Lecture on the experiences of a literary tradeswoman ought to be interesting, so let me read your paper on that subject."

At the time of his death the Press but echoed the general sentiment when it spoke of him as one Scotland was proud of and could ill spare.

He was modest about his success, and seldom alluded to it. In all his letters I can find only one or two slight remarks bearing on his professional position. Thus, "I am now sitting in the President's

chair of the College supposed to be watching the performance of a number of young doctors who are aspirants for the Fellowship, and are writing answers to some very hard questions. They are very quiet and good, and some look unhappy ; many won't get through, I can see. Poor boys." Again, "I like the work of the University Court which I have taken up energetically."

"I hope to join Cecil and Co. in Kent after the June meeting of the University Court. I try never to miss the meetings of that august body."

In 1907 he wrote, "I have been elected again to serve on the University Court, which means a lot of work, pleasant but rather hard—at least I begin to feel work to be hard nowadays."

Shortly after his death, the University Court recorded its appreciation of his services thus :—"By the death of Dr Joseph Bell the University Court have been deprived of one of their oldest members.



DR JOSEPH BELL
Age 34

“Elected by the General Council in 1895 as one of their assessors, he has continually discharged the duties of the appointment since that period.

“He was punctilious in attendance, and brought to bear on the transaction of business a keen intelligence and knowledge of affairs which gave weight to his opinions, and which materially assisted the Court in their deliberations.

“As a Graduate of the University he was loyal to his Alma Mater and jealous of her reputation. His colleagues found him invariably most ready to undertake the duties which he was called upon to discharge; and his genial nature and habitual courtesy both in manner and in speech made it a pleasure to be associated with him.”

Our leading paper, *The Scotsman*, gave a most appreciative obituary notice, from which I here quote a few sentences:—

“Dr Joseph Bell was widely known throughout the medical world, in which he took a distinguished position. Numerous

stories are narrated of the manner in which Dr Bell sometimes surprised his patients, assistants, or colleagues by displaying his knowledge of some personal action or experience, as to which no information had been furnished by them, but the clue to which was found in some item which any eye less observant would have passed over.

“He was an admirable teacher, rapid in observation, clear in the expression of opinion, bright in manner, painstaking with his pupils . . . obtained their affection, . . . a strongly marked personality, a likeable, sympathetic temperament.

“In the midst of his arduous duties he found time to devote to the instruction of nurses ; and was, indeed, a pioneer in this important department of hospital work.

“He was one of the originators of the Hospital for Incurables, and he discharged the duties of surgeon to that Institution up to the close of his life. His interest in this work was of the keenest, and his

regular visits were greatly appreciated by the sufferers whose burdens he lightened by his kindly sympathy and cheering words."

His tenderness over the little maimed lives in the Cripples Home was womanly in its intuitive comprehension. But his warm sympathy never interfered with the cool decision necessary to his work, and many times the superficial observer thought he was indifferent to the torture of a patient seeing him act with professional zeal, absorbed in the work of his hands.

I well remember the first glimpse I had of Joe's "heart behind his head." He was attending my husband in a very serious illness. It was early in our acquaintance, and I had met him only once or twice before that time.

One morning instead of walking straight into the bedroom as usual, he turned into Dr Saxby's study, and he said, "Look here, child, he must be told the nature of his attacks. Dr Begbie thinks so. You *must*

tell him." The poor, sensitive invalid, nervous, broken! I shrank from such a task, and I cried out, "Oh, I can't do it. I can't tell him. It will break his heart."

"Very well, all right," Joe answered, with a careless toss of his head. "If *you* won't, *I* must. It's in my line. All in the doctor's day's work, you know," and he smiled.

I thought, "How callous."

Presently he said, "Well, I must get to work. Let's go and see him." But when we reached the bedroom door he laid his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Sit where I can't see your face when I am talking to him."

Behind the curtain I listened and marvelled at the tact, the gentleness, the knowledge of his patient's character, the hopefulness displayed. The bitter truth was suggested so slowly and carefully that before long my husband himself remarked, quite composedly, "I suppose it is something of that sort that has me."

“One can’t lead a doctor off the track about the like,” was the lightly spoken answer. Then, with grave tenderness, he spoke such words of comfort and hope as could come from only a Heaven-inspired wisdom and love.

Back in the study, Dr Bell said, “Now don’t look so white, remember it is your work to cheer him up. That bit is over, and well over. You were a brave child, and didn’t make a fuss, and I did not see your face ; but I saw your hands, and they said more than I like to think of.”

From that day—more than forty long years ago—till his death, I knew the kind soul of Joe Bell, and I carried to him my many griefs and anxieties, sure of ready sympathy. “Father-Confessor” became his pet name ; for though he was not many years my senior he was a “tower of strength and store of wisdom,” so that I could only look up and obey, and draw power from so great a source.

Yet, though he could give so much, he

needed, like lesser folk, the sympathy of others. He gave me his confidence, and relied on my appreciation of his trials. It was little, so little, I could give, but I am thankful that my friendship was a comfort to him, and filled a place in his requirements.

In February 1876, he wrote : “ I know you will feel with me losing one of my very dearest friends in Dr Begbie I met Dr Saxby at his house first. We have been very close friends. I helped him to nurse his father, and to close the eyes of his eldest son ; and on Wednesday night and yesterday I had the privilege of nursing him. He was very good and patient. . . .

“ Then to-night I had to help poor Lady —— to close her little girl’s eyes, nearly six years old and a dear child, very sweet. So I am not cheerful and vent my griefs on you, who will help me to bear them. Give me your prayers and a little note.”

The “ proof ” of an obituary notice of his friend, Dr Begbie, was enclosed, and it lies

before me now. The notice appeared in the *Medical Journal*, which Dr Bell edited. Need I add that a man so widely known and loved as Dr Warburton Begbie deserved all the praise bestowed upon him by his friend.

I do not think I can do better than quote a part of what Dr Bell said regarding this brother doctor. It is a touching picture of a model physician. "Begbie as a teacher was greatest at the bedside. His clinical visits were masterpieces both in precept and example. He taught not only how to win the patient's confidence, to get his whole history, to examine him carefully yet rapidly, with consideration for his feelings, but he was great both in diagnosis and prognosis; and, with a rarer power still, had the faith and patience to use and profit by the use of remedies, not drugs merely, but diet, regimen. With him the student learned manners as well as physic, nursing along with diagnosis. In his relations to his friends in the

profession, whether in town or country, Begbie was inimitable, unapproached. To his town brethren, who used to rush in upon him with their troubles and difficulties at any hour of the day, he was uniformly gentle and obliging. An example of punctuality, never hurried or bustling, tender in manner, and patiently attentive, he had the marvellous faculty of, even when differing in prognosis or treatment, never shaking the confidence of the patient in his own doctor.

“An utter absence of pomposity, self-consciousness, and self-assertion, a moral loftiness, which kept his sweetness of manner from ever becoming less than reality, contributed in no small degree to his unexampled popularity and success as a consultant.

“His country brethren knew well with what readiness and unselfishness he would alter his plans, or give up his rest, to suit their wishes. . . . Of his abounding beneficence, his charity shown with infinite



MAURICEWOOD
Dr Joseph Bell's Country House

tenderness and delicacy of feeling, combined with judicious selection of objects, we hardly like to speak, knowing how he himself shrank from publicity.

“He considered himself only the steward of the wealth he had to work so hard to win ; and very few but the recipients knew the numberless ways in which he helped the widow and the orphan, the student and the clergyman ; and all was done as if the recipient was conferring, he only receiving the favour. His tall stature, well-knit manly frame, and temperate habits seemed to promise a long future of usefulness. . . .

“All that the highest skill . . . could do was done. . . . None of us will forget the patience, gentleness, courtesy, and manliness he showed to the last.

“There was little change on the grave sad firmness of the face, that had so often by its human sympathy helped others to bear ; there was much of the old humour and marvellous power of observation, which those who knew him best saw under his

calm visage. There was perfect simplicity of faith and patience of hope. He knew he was dying. The powerful, useful, widely honoured man, lying down in midtime of his days, like one resolved to die, was an affecting sight.

“What he said of time and eternity, of sin and grace, of himself and of his Saviour, he said in a whisper and in tears—in a whisper which is now rising into the song of salvation, and in tears which God has now wiped from His servant’s eyes.

“While he was with us he went about doing good, and now that he has been taken from us, we turn our eyes to the land whither he has gone, and comfort our hearts concerning our brother, saying, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

I think I have quoted that beautiful tribute of affection because the picture drawn of Dr Begbie by his friend might be a word-portrait of the writer himself.

A few months after his wife died her

mother, the Honble. Mrs Erskine Murray, passed away. She had lived in his house since his marriage, and he wrote of her: "I don't believe any mother-in-law ever was so good to, or so fond of, a son-in-law. I feel very 'left.'"

From that time all down the years blow followed blow, recorded in brief, sad words such as:—

"You will be sorry for us in the loss of our good mother. What a mother she was! Write to me. I feel this so much."

"Just a line to tell you that my dear father has at last got his wish and found mother."

"Thanks for your kind and loving sympathy which I knew were mine. I was prepared for the loss, as months ago I gave up hope. It is the first break in our family of nine (ageing 61-44), which is a remarkable record."

"The dear old Auntie was the last of that generation, so now *we* are the old generation. Is the blood as good now as

then? We buried her on a snowy day in the old burying-ground, which will never receive another guest."

"Another sister gone. She was very near to us all. I know you feel with me. How it helps to have the 'thought' of those we love."

"It was a sad birthday, as my sailor brother died last night."

"You know that Erskine Murray, Edith's brother, died a fortnight ago. We buried him in the Dean Cemetery.

"Then my old friends, Annandale and Heron Watson, died on successive days, and they also were buried in the Dean last Monday and Tuesday. So it has been a time of open graves and many old memories.

"Write soon and tell me what you *knew* of my doings without my writing them. I feel in some ways very old, in others absurdly young. If you were here I am sure you would do me good, and possibly wake me up."

The allusion to "what you knew of my doings without my writing them" refers to the curious gift of second-sight which I possess.

This strange faculty revealed itself when I was little more than a child. Dr Bell was rather sceptical about it for a long time, but intensely interested, and often asked me to experiment; and when I did so successfully, he willingly allowed that there was "something in it."

But when Professor Henry Sidgwick wished me to come to Cambridge for some experiments in the interests of the Psychical Society, Joe "put his foot down," and in his terse way gave me his opinion, which was unto me a law.

"How do you know," he said, "but that the deil's in it? And until you are sure he *isn't* in it, you should not tempt Providence. I allow it may be a scientific fact, as you persist in thinking, but science hasn't got a grip on it yet. It is never safe to meddle with what one

does not understand. Such innocent little experiments as we wot of can't hurt, and I'd soon see if they did, and stop it. But Sidgwick and his Society is a different matter. Your nerves are all on the surface, and easily worked upon. These psychical experts will play the mischief with you. Besides, I rather think the deil *may* have a little to do with it."

So I dropped all experiments, but the faculty often worked of itself, and then I used to surprise, and eventually convinced, my "Father-confessor."

"Are you a witch?" he wrote. "Your vision was most interesting and quite true. Yes, the house is 'dark, shaded by firs and yews,' and it all happened. Is it telepathy, or mesmerism, or what?"

"Why don't you come in your astral body and see me sometimes? I am afraid I am too much of the earth earthy to be able to see you, but you might try and tell me the result. I want more proofs."

“No wonder you were haunted for the last three days. I have been wondering when this letter was coming, and had made up what I am pleased to call my mind to write to you to-night if it did, or did not, arrive. So it came all right by next day's post.”

“I don't see why your astral should not come and see how the fishing was getting on. I had a splendid holiday in that lovely country.”

“This is a lovely spot in the heart of the wildest Highland hills, and the peace and the absolute quiet all day on the loch with two nice young gillies, who know very little English, is just what I need. This is perhaps the most beautiful spot in Scotland. Even an astral might enjoy it, but I have seen nothing of your soul here ; so, as your witchcraft is weak evidently at present you can't have been visiting these parts, so I will give a description.” . . .

“What's the matter ? I was constrained to think much and rather anxiously about

you on Sunday afternoon (July 3rd, about 5 p.m.).” . . .

“I knew you were at your ‘white magic’ and thus expected this letter. Your visit was such a distinct one I must admit your power, and I wish you could teach it to me. But perhaps it is that I have not enough of the spiritual element in me to originate manifestations. Also I fancy if one is at all doubtful it won’t work. One must bring a receptive mind to the like, and always deep down ‘I doubt and fear.’”

“An astral body must be very unsatisfactory if it can neither speak nor touch, but you used to *see* well enough what was going on when you wandered about.”

“I have been trying for a day or two to produce a letter from you, and here it is. I had been anxious as if you were not flourishing. I am sorry it was so.” . . .

“Glad to think I was a bit of a help to you in your sad times, and hope to be still a comfort even at a distance.”

“I am not afraid for your nerves now,



DR JOSEPH BELL
The Daily Round

and I am sure Satan is *not* in it. Try your luck at an astral visit. If anything comes of it, it would do for the Psychical Society of happy memory. Give me some good examples of your power in that direction. Mind I am a real believer in it now, not joking, and it is very naughty of you to punish me now for former scepticism. You ought to know that no wise man accepts a new theory without searching and exhaustive examination."

Later still he said: "You know I am now converted to belief in your white magic."

Nevertheless, there was a good deal of quiet fun in the way he wrote of this mysterious power of mine and its manifestations, and he often qualified his approval by saying: "I must see the science of it before I can be *quite* convinced."

He has recorded some of his "Likes and Dislikes" in my old Confession Album, and when returning the book he wrote: "I have been busy at those questions.

They are very difficult. The difficulty is to write something between burlesque on the one hand, and things too sad and real on the other. But the idea of making a Father-confessor confess is very funny." I will give a few of these questions and answers, for they are a truthful statement of his real sentiments :—

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Favourite Virtue . . . | Loving-kindness. |
| Vice most disliked . . . | Hypocrisy. |
| Favourite Poet . . . | Robert Browning. |
| Favourite Author . . . | Carlyle. |
| Your special aversion . . . | Company manners. |
| Your special "weakness" . . . | Grouse shooting in September. |
| Is Hope or Memory dearer ? | Hope, after "she arose from out her swoon And gazed upon His face." |
| Favourite hour . . . | Between the lights. |
| Ideal of Enjoyment . . . | What passeth understanding. |
| Ideal of Misery . . . | Self-consciousness. |
| Nation most admired . . . | East-coast Scotch (Scandinavian). |
| Nation most disliked . . . | Polish Jews and Connaught Irish. |
| The Life you prefer . . . | A busy one with a spring in it. |
| Favourite employment . . . | Consultations in the country. |
| Highest worldly aspiration . . . | To keep out of the Calton Jail ! |
| Favourite flower . . . | Lily of the valley. |
| Your Besetting sin . . . | Stinginess and general meanness. |

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|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Place you like best . . . | Over the hills and far away. |
| What most excites your enthusiasm? . . . | Facing fearful odds. |
| What most excites your pity? . . . | A modest student who yet must be "plucked." |
| Your motto . . . | "Be the day's march never so long At length it ringeth to Even- song." |

I noticed that even when Joe was most energetically at work with seemingly tireless buoyancy there was that unconscious longing after rest and quiet, and a yearning desire to be out of Earth's turmoil. It is certain he overtaxed his powers, and he said so at the last. "I worked too long and too much," he said the last time I saw him. That desire of rest was very apparent in the letters he sent from country quarters when he was off for rare and highly valued holidays.

"Think of me free from work for a blessed week." Or it would be the few words following a long and amusing description of a house-party. "They don't bother me to join things, so I have some

quiet walks, and wish the world would end in a wood."

"I am writing on my knees before a fire, as it is very cold and the table is at the other side of my bedroom. So excuse the laziness of a pencil and a weary soul."

"I travelled from Perth in company with a vol. of Browning, . . . then a lovely moonlight drive that made me long for the 'Lights Beyond.'" After a lengthy description of an aristocratic house-party he said :—"We are very pleasant to each other, and prettily behaved, and, oh, so fashionable and correct. Don't you fancy the sort of good boy I would become soon? I have to get back to work next week."

"It will be nice when *all* the work is done."

"In a train. A very busy fortnight finished to-day at two, and work must begin again on Thursday morning. So here goes. It is a fast train and shakes a great deal, and from the smell of burning

wood I think the carriage is on fire. We shall see. No, it was a false alarm, and soon I shall see the hills from whence cometh my aid. Oh, for the rest of the everlasting hills."

"This has been a day after your own heart, wild and windy, so!" "I had a pleasant 12th, and long and hard walking on the moor with the keepers. Birds very wild and strong. Bedtime and happy-weariness with the old shadows lingering around me. I would not have them vanish, they hold so much. Good-night, my child."

"We are having the worst harvest weather I can remember, most of the crops still out and some not cut yet. Farmers will be hard put to it, and bread will be dear, I fear; coal also. I feel for the poor, and so my holiday has not been a success."

"About giving up work, I often think of it, and would like a winter abroad; but I put it from me. It means so much

for so many that I like to help. Moderate work seems best for us all on the whole."

"My holiday this year was a great rest, but tempered by the most appalling weather, wind and torrents of rain, and a great part of the time I was clad in oil-skins and so'wester. But I came back heartened a bit. Why did you not find me in spite of the weather?"

Talking of holidays reminds me of an incident which shows his fine instinct for saying and doing the right thing at the right time. I was to pay a visit to my old home after many years' absence, and I was shrinking terribly from the ordeal of finding new faces for old.

I did not know that Joe Bell had gauged my feeling about it. He had laughingly told me to go and run wild, and return to Edinburgh untamed as when I first left the Shetland Isles.

On my arrival at home I found a letter from him awaiting me. It had travelled by the same steamer which carried me, it

had been “timed” to meet me just then, and this is how he met my sad heart :—

“Things are always worse in anticipation than in reality. The first home-coming is not so bad as you expected, and the old child-memories are overcoming the later ones, and you don’t know whether to laugh or cry. Do both, laugh before folk, and then you can with a good conscience give a cry behind backs. Is it not so ?

“And now you will have to face all the old ‘puir bodies’ who can remember you and your husband, but they won’t say trying things — for Shetlanders have tact and gentle ways. You won’t get the full good of your home-coming for a while. At present you remember the sadnesses. Soon they will pass, and you will have only the lovely sunset afterglow which will soothe and comfort your strained heart. You will love to see the old places and remember happy times.”

He had a kindly feeling for all Shetlanders. His uncle had been Sheriff-Substitute for

the islands, and Joe had spent some pleasant holidays when a lad at the old house of Lunna.

His gift of quick perception had led him, even when very young, to understand the obscure and curious traits which characterise Shetlanders, making them a people not easy to fathom. But with one who has the key to their idiosyncrasies they are open and confiding enough. That key Joe Bell possessed. So the sick and sorrowing of our isles sought his help, and always got it. He was a busy, "fame-encircled" doctor, but he gave—and more often than not for no remuneration—his time and careful attention to the humble folk who came from Shetland.

That is not saying that he overlooked some of the disagreeable traits in our islanders. "Your folk," he said, "can find fault, but they don't know how to praise. . . . There are snobs everywhere, and I think a Shetland snob is about the worst."

The gift of a pair of socks or gloves



DR JOSEPH BELL

Photo by Moffat

from a grateful patient evoked a warm acknowledgment out of all proportion to the poor woman's gift. "Isn't this touching? I am delighted, and I hope the child will recover. . . . It was so little I could do for it, but it does refresh me to find that they like what I do."

He was fond of children; devoted to his own. There never was a more unselfish father. In almost all his letters there are allusions to them. Of his daughters he wrote once: "Jean and Cecil write every day when we are absent one from another, and I write always every day to both, often just a scrap; but they would be very much surprised, and think I was dead, if they did not get that scrap."

When they were married the ties were not loosened, and they had the sad pleasure of being with him at the last — his children and flowers about him at his quiet, lovely country home of Mauricewood.

The deaths of his only son, and eldest

grandson, were very heavy griefs, but he bore himself as ever with manly courage and Christian fortitude. What he wrote of those sorrows is too sacred to be repeated.

He “had thought” always for the griefs of others, and was instant in offering consolation. Thus in August 1906, he wrote: “Just a few lines to let you know I am with you in this loss. The *Scotsman* says it was sudden, so I trust he did not suffer. Tell me all about it. I saw your dear brother here before he left Blair Drummond Manse. He looked well and patient, even cheerful, and wonderful for his seventy-eight years.

“Thanks for telling me about Biot. It was nice that he had that peaceful end among his own people and the quiet islands rather than by the sound of electric trams and motors with their bells and hooters.

“You would love to be there to see him laid in the grave. You will miss the head

of the family; but they are gathering together elsewhere. Be comforted. I know a letter from a friend when we are in trouble is always a sort of help and a real pleasure. Let the wildness and silence of your beloved islands bring you strength."

"I know you are right. I do work too much; but I should like to die in harness, and what does it matter after all? One would like to put in as much work as possible—if only the work is of the right sort. But I get days off, and I do enjoy my runs to Mauricewood. Children and flowers are very comforting. My garden there is lovely."

At Christmas 1909, he wrote: "The children had a happy Christmas, and one old man you know quite a peaceful one. Christmases come and go fast now, and the end is nearing for us old folks. Many many thanks for your warm love and good wishes. Take care of yourself and don't write many letters—except to me, and it

isn't letters you send me, but 'talks,' which are best."

"It speaks well for both of us that our friendship has been so close and had no breaks all those years—nearly a generation. It is a record such as few people can beat."

"You have worked splendidly. . . . Your sons will rise up and call you blessed. Certainly you have deserved it of them, and your 'one wee lassie' is waiting for you somewhere. If I could do it, your sky would be always blue and your grass green."

"I love to hear your visions. Please let me have your last bit of work to criticise. I am so glad you have left the burden of years behind you at last, and I am willing to take it on my already burdened old age."

"Seriously, I am so pleased to know that you are well and quieted, and that I in some small ways have helped you. Did you not see a wee bit of gladness in my old visage the other day? Yours is not very

tell-tale. It can keep a secret if it wished. Fancy calling me a moon! What next? But the moon has not 'many brooks.' It is an old volcano burned up and uninhabited. The mountains are craters of extinct volcanoes. So your simile is a very good one so far, and the 'little brook' was a refreshing comfort, and moistened the soil of the dry volcano!"

"Your tempestuous voyage must have been horrible, but it was good you got safe through, and that the fear of death delivered you from the bondage of seasickness, which I suppose is really worse than drowning. I don't think the parting of soul and body will be a hard job. It will not be unwelcome, will it?"

I must conclude here. I cannot yet dwell on a parting interview, only a few days before he went, when we talked a little of the past and of the future. Not much was said. There was no need for words. His wonderful self-control had not weakened, and he could pass a joke in the

hall when we joined his daughter there. I had learned in the school of affliction to conquer emotion, and so . . .

As he had lived, Joe Bell died, brave, self-forgetful, upheld by the Divine. . . . I shall not see his like again.

JESSIE M. E. SAXBY

